

Week 27

Road to the Cross Pt.1

Matthew 26:1-56: Preparing the way

How could we say that Jesus paved the way to the cross? Who would do that? Even while praying Jesus wanted to avoid it. Yet, he knew there was no way. Jesus says in Matthew 26 verses 39 and 42 *"thy will be done."* Before that in Matthew 23 Jesus called out the religious rulers. He poked the bear and now they were angry. The path to the cross was set. Now all that needed to happen was for it to play itself out. It's interesting that Jesus says to his Father in heaven "if this cannot pass away." What is that all about? I believe that through the evil of the heart, there was no other way to save humanity but through the cross.

The disciples were Jewish. They had heard the stories of the Messiah from childhood. It hung on that nation like thorns. When, where, how, and by who would we be delivered. In recent history the Maccabean revolt was fresh on their minds. A similar revolt would happen around 70A.D. The Jewish nation was restless and had enough of being ruled by foreign lands. The first 5 verses of Matthew 26 are stunning. Jesus pronounces to his Jewish followers that the Son of Man will be crucified. They must have looked like deer in the headlights. Nothing is said. Yet, in the background the religious rulers plotted.

It says they wanted to arrest Jesus in stealth. They feared the people in Matthew 21. They feared the Passover in Matthew 26. These rulers feared the Romans too. I bet they knew the pulse of the nation. Revolution and revolt were in the air. I really feel that Jesus came at the perfect time. He was the eye in the storm. Power and control within the Synagogue was slipping away. It was time for a change. Is it time for a change in you?

Matthew 26: 4 **"and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him."**

Matthew 21:46 **"They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet."**

There are several references I have provided below that mark the time has or has not come. In Matthew 26:16 Judas began to look for an opportunity (time) to give Jesus to the authorities. Is it really because he hated him? Was it because they saw things differently? I have believed for some time now that Judas was an impatient man. He wanted it now. He wanted the Son of man to take the Romans today. To me, his play was to put Jesus in a corner where he would have to act. To make the time now.

One of the reasons I see that is because right after Judas started looking, Jesus told the disciples to tell the man housing the Passover "it is time." A few years before he told his mother that his time had

not yet come in the book of John. Now it was different. A man gave a donkey upon request. A man provided a place for the Passover upon request. I really wonder if that man was Joseph of Arimathea who collected Jesus body in the book of Mark. It says in those verses that he was waiting for the time. When do you think Jesus will return?

Matthew 26:18 **“He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’”**

Matthew 8:29 **“What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”**

John 2:4 **“And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.”**

Matthew 26:50 is weird. Judas comes up to Jesus to betray him. Jesus turns around and says “friend do what you must.” Then in verse 53 Jesus again rebukes Peter and says he could call on legions of Angels to defend himself, but he won’t. Jesus has his game face on. He prayed to the Father for another way, yet it was crystal clear. The time was now. The purpose was now. The cross was clearer than ever before. Judas betrays Jesus. Yet, Peter remains loyal even after Jesus threw him under the bus several times.

They could not keep watch while Jesus prayed. Do you think Jesus was surprised? Peter stumbles in faith by trying to be brave twice. Once by saying he would protect Jesus and another by cutting the ear of a warrior. Yet, Jesus never waivers. Later Peter remains near the Lord. The loyal friend to the end. It’s hard to not see ourselves in Peter. If you had known what would happen to Jesus would you stop it? In verse 56 it says that that “all” these things had to happen. It also says his disciples fled. They had heard it, lived it, and experienced the Christ at work. Yet, they missed it totally.

Matthew 26:56 **“But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.”**

John 12:16 **“At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.”**

Read Matthew 26:1-56. Read Isaiah 53 to be reminded that this was predicted long ago. The path is a very old one to the cross. Check out Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and Galatians 3:13.

1. It’s interesting that Jesus says to his disciples right at the beginning of Matthew 26 “you know.” They were told several times that Jesus would be handed over. Jesus hinted through the parables that someone had to be sacrificed. They knew the old tales of the Messiah. The

disciples knew but they did not see. We all have been told Jesus will return. There have been stories of a place called heaven. Is God real? The answers within church walls vary. How could they vary? Don't believers go there? That's partially why I see the Bible so clearly. It's a mirror of ourselves. We hear yet, we don't understand. We understand but we can't see. Sometimes the answer or truth are right before us but we seem blind. The disciples were that close but yet so far too.

The plot is set. We get to see it. The Pharisees are planning. Jesus went out of his way to aggravate them. So many times, Jesus mentioned that we should know the signs of the times. So many times, the people asked for a sign. In some ways it comes back to Luke 21:24. That verse mentions the time of the gentiles. Jesus bumped into non-Jews all over the place. Greeks came. Samaritans came. An Ethiopian Eunice had questions. At Pentecost, in Acts 2, there were many from all over the region. Jesus said he came for the Jewish nation but the world was hungry for God.

That's why I think the story of the mysterious woman anointing Jesus with oil is here. Jesus mentions in verse 13 that wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, she will be remembered. God called the Jews back to him but the world responded. The world essentially anointed Jesus as king. The religious rulers of the day did not. She is not named because she represents all of us. She is creation groaning for God. Right after this section Judas walks away. The plot thickens.

Matthew 26: 13 "Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions."

Acts 2:11-12 "(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Luke 21:24 "And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

2. How can I adequately teach these verses? There is so much going on. Certainly, someone will say I missed so much. Jesus is sprinkling prophecy throughout these chapters. Some is new and others are old. He plainly tells of his death. He says who will do it. We read that Judas plotted behind his back. The religious rulers plotted behind the scenes. Then there is this Son of man thing.

Jesus seems to reference himself as this Son of man. There is a ton of speculation of who this figure in the Old testament is. Jesus clearly thinks it's himself. This person is the ancient one. He will see visions. He will come to restore justice. Why does Jesus talk in this language? I believe it's because they knew of this person. Jesus is really talking in their language. They should have got it. Those were just stories, right? Again, it's right before them and they were not listening.

If you go on further, you can see that Jesus is taking them down a path. So many looked at the Passover last meal as the focal point. I want you to see through it. Jesus predicts his death. He honors God. He mentions the Son of man. Then he comes back to the truth in verse

34. Many will fall away. They wanted Jesus to take over, not die. They wanted the Romans crushed. In-between this Jesus talks about forgiveness of sins. He talks about serving. Their Son of man was not the real Son of man. Jesus tried to get through to them through prophesy.

Matthew 26:24 "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Daniel 8:17 "So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end."

3. The Passover. Oh boy, there is a ton here. We can talk about the meaning through Moses. We could symbolize the bread and wine. We could encourage us all to come to a table together. We can make it tradition, spiritual, or something else. In the old testament of Exodus, God came in form of a spirit of death. He told the Israelites to put blood over their doors. Death of the first born was coming. Only the blood of a sacrificed animal could save them from judgment.

Passover hangs over all of us. There is a judgment day for all of us. Some believe in heaven and hell. Others just say that death will win in the end. The Passover symbolizes the past and what is yet to come. Will death pass us over? They say that if we believe in Jesus then death has no victory in us. We will pass into eternal life. The last supper is full of symbolism. Jesus will be sacrificed. Death is coming.

Some say that the wine we drink in remembrance of Jesus could turn into his blood as we drink it. The same is said of the bread turning into flesh. Some churches do this tradition weekly, while others not at all. Where do we stand on the last supper? I feel that we have idolized it. It was to be a remembrance. An honor. Yet, it's become a thing. An event. It's become more than intended. If you think about the themes in these last few chapters. The Jews did not get God. Our observance of the Passover is similar. We've taken Jesus death too far. It's not about us but about Jesus and his sacrifice.

Matthew 26: 28 "This is my blood of the[b] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Exodus 12:12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord."

4. Meanwhile in the garden. It's fascinating the way the Bible always returns to places. Adam and Eve betray God's trust in the Garden of Eden. Jesus is betrayed by a friend in a garden called Gethsemane. God throws them out. Jesus is taken out. Does God bind Adam and Eve? Does God proclaim them guilty and beat them? It's ominous that Jesus prays and the disciple's sleep.

In the garden of Eden, the two hid. In this garden the soldiers came. Jesus was betrayed with a kiss. Verse 56 says it all. Up to now we have heard teaching, prophesy, and parables. The story of Jesus has led to this point. Verse 56 is the end of part one. The will and plan of God is now finished from Eden to Gethsemane. Verse 56 says this was all done to fulfill prophesy. Then it says "they all fled."

People hang on Jesus praying three times. It must mean something. They love to talk about Judas betrayal. Yet, nothing could stop this. It was set in motion from the beginning of time. Some have asked "what if Jesus refused to die for us?" What if Adam and Eve never sinned? Would Jesus be necessary? On and on the questions, dissection, and scrutinizing continues. Yet, what remains? History always repeats itself. It just does. Adam and Eve did sin. All have sinned. Jesus did choose to die. A sacrifice was offered. Prophecy was fulfilled. People scream "look deeper." God screams be quiet and listen. It's right before us as it always was.

Matthew 26:56 "But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."

Genesis 3:8 "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

What it means?

Go back and read verses 20-25 of chapter 26. There is an exchange and I want you to see it. How often do we say *surely not I?* I did not kill Jesus. I was mostly a good man. I was tricked. I am not to blame. We could go on and on. Recently, Syria used chemical weapons to kill some people. The United States attacked Syria in honor of those who died unjustly. Yet, there are many who say we should stay out of it. That the U.S. is making it up just to bomb something. What is the truth?

The truth might be *surely not I*. Would bad people kill 6 million Jews? Some say no. Would a government use chemical weapons? Some say no. Would a good God allow evil? Some say no. Surely people are better than the Bible says. Surely there are no need for guns, fences, and police. Clearly Adam and Eve is just a story. Clearly Jesus died because he ruffled the wrong feathers. There is no hidden meaning. People don't need a savior.

However, the world has had a history of evil. Truth is being attacked at rates that astound me. Sin might be the normal but it's still not good stuff. Even if murder is legal it's still murder. Someone still loses. I think the reason we bomb, have guns, and build fences is because deep down we know. I feel that Matthew 26 was written to show humanity. To show that there was no hope in us. Friends betray. Swords are used. We sleep while people need us to watch. People plot behind our backs. Yet, within all that God has a plan. Jesus came and became the last Passover. There seems to be hope on the horizon.

Matthew 26: 54 "But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

Matthew 4: 14 "This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet."

Matthew 12:17 "This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet."

Matthew 21: 4 "This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet."